

## Gakona Junction Village, Inc.

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February 9, 2003

State of Alaska  
Local Boundary Commission  
550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Suite 1770  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3510

Attn.: Kevin Waring, Chair

Re: Response to "Report of the LBC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the  
Legislature" regarding incorporation of the Unorganized Borough.

Dear Chairman Waring:

Having spent three hours attending the LBC teleconference yesterday on the above noted topic, I feel compelled to write and give my assessment of the testimony we heard concerning that portion of the Unorganized Borough commonly referred to as the Copper Valley Region.

I was impressed that, not only virtually every sector of the region was represented; the participation was seemingly unanimous on their opinions that this is not the time to begin efforts to incorporate the area into a borough.

I understand that you are not recommending that the area become a borough, but rather that it should be considered along with several other selected areas of the Unorganized Borough.

That said, it seems quite evident that the decision to include our valley in that recommendation stems from a cursory study done in a very short time frame with inadequate, inaccurate, and skewed information garnered from questionable sources. Using the 1990 Census is the first mistake, as it did not, in any way, reflect the actual numbers that exist in the communities on employment, population, property values, and tax base. All of these factors are paramount in determining our ability to support a borough and must be studied in depth before making a recommendation to the Legislature to move ahead.

It was apparent that many of the residents objected to Senator Wilkins' statement indicating that we are second class citizens with "palms up" looking for handouts from those in the organized boroughs. That theme was repeated several times throughout the testimony and I agree. The Senator seems bent on finding a way to negate his responsibility in funding education to the children of Alaska and shift that responsibility to the rural areas through boroughization. We, of course, feel there must be other solutions to the issue as a borough in this area stands little chance of success. Controlling waste of capital and operating funds would be a good start.

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### Testimony:

A few comments were poignant and deserve mention here.

1. Glen Marrende of Tok made a strong argument against "regional" vs. "local" government as noted in Article X of the constitution. Close attention and research needs to be given to that statement.
2. Several persons spoke to the lack of time to prepare for responses due to the inadequate way the LBC published the information and hearing date. Some had not received any information at all and some received it just within the last few days. That is far too little time to properly assess the information and come to a rational judgment on such a lengthy and confusing issue.
3. Jane Brown of Glennallen noted that your commission has no representation from the Unorganized Borough. That is a serious mistake given the fact that the report notes that there are two vacancies on the commission that could easily be filled by residents of this and other areas in the proposed Boroughs.
4. Daniel Boone of Chitina spoke to the issue of the inaccuracy of the figures used in the study stating that their area has a 97% unemployment factor, a decline in residency and how taxation could easily result in a loss of property for non-payment of taxes after just three or four short years.
5. John Devens of Kenny Lake questioned the estimated property values as being inaccurate misleading. He noted that the \$128 thousand average is far too high and that many of the homes in the area do not qualify for financing by lending institutions due to a lack of water, sewer, size and adequate means of appraisal.

There were many other objections to the report but I will defer to the transcript at this point.

In summary it is my view that, even though we realize a borough will be in our future at some point, now is not the time. Until and unless a more detailed study is done by the proponents of organization (the Legislature) showing what the costs are and where the funding will come to justify organizing; we cannot support moving forward at this time.

I urge that you remove the Copper Valley in your recommendation to the Legislature. Failing that please include a disclaimer that will advise the readers of the inaccuracies of the numbers and so-called facts of the report.

Sincerely,



L. Alan LeMaster